

February 20, 2004

Summary

On February 23, 2004 a 35- year-old tractor operator was killed when the tractor attachment he was working on fell off the hydraulic jack holding it up.

The victim had worked for the employer for about 12 years. His normal job was tractor operator and was working his normal work schedule in the orchard operating a 4610 Ford tractor with a Pak-Flail brush beater that was attached to the tractor's 3-point hitch. Other job duties of the victim included general maintenance and repair of agricultural equipment.

The brush beater attachment malfunctioned and was taken to the main shop for repairs. The victim discussed the repairs with the orchard manager and then started to do the work to the attachment. The orchard manager left the victim to do the work.

The problem was with a part underneath the brush beater attachment requiring welding. The brush beater was raised using a 5-ton hydraulic jack place on the corner of the attachment. The victim then proceeded to get underneath the equipment to do the welding repairs.

No energy control was used. The tractor wheels were not chocked to prevent movement of the equipment. The transmission gears were set in the neutral position allowing free wheel movement. There was no blocking of the attachment while it was suspended for repairs. No block was placed on the faceplate of the hydraulic jack to prevent slipping of the attachment off the jack. The 3-point hitch was not pinned to prevent hydraulic system pressure relief, allowing the equipment to come down (The hydraulic system was found to have an oil leak under the main housing, which contributed to the pressure relief).

When the orchard manager returned, he found the victim pinned under the brush beater. He attempted to lift the attachment with the jack but could not. He then radioed for assistance and called 911. With additional help he was able to remove the victim from under the attachment. Paramedics arrived within 20 minutes but the victim was pronounced dead at the scene from mechanical asphyxia due to compression of the chest.

Requirements/Recommendations

- Employees who are required to do maintenance or repair work to machinery with hazardous energy are required to have trained on procedures to control it.

An employer is required to have a plan for controlling hazardous energy while doing maintenance or making repairs to machinery. For agriculture the regulation is WAC 296-307-320 [Control of Hazardous Energy \(Lockout-Tagout\)](#) for general industry employers it is found in WAC 296-24-110. [Safety Procedures](#)

- It is required that after the load has been raised, it must immediately be cribbed, blocked, or otherwise secured to ensure employee safety. Working under a load raised only with jacks is prohibited.
- It is required to maintain all motor vehicles and their parts in good repair and safe condition.
- It is required that every employee who operates an agricultural tractor is informed of the operating practices listed below and of any other practices dictated by the work environment
- It is required that at the time of initial assignment and at least annually thereafter, all employees be instructed in the safe operation and servicing of all equipment that the employee will use.